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AFGHANISTAN

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Women Sell Grapes for Export to India



Afghanistan's women are an important part of the country's agricultural sector, but they often grow fruit and vegetables solely for their own families. That changed for hundreds of Afghan women when they sold grapes for export to India in October 2010 for the first time.

More than 1,500 women members of the Afghan Women's Business Council were trained on good agricultural practices, proper harvesting, sorting, packing, and marketing, including food processing at Badam Bagh farm in Kabul, a USAID-supported facility owned by the Ministry of Agriculture. Used as a place to train people interested in agriculture, the farm demonstrates modern agricultural methods like grape trellising, drip irrigation and greenhouses. The farm also researches new varieties of fruit and vegetables for Afghanistan and features fields of grapes, sweet corn, spinach, cabbage, strawberries, and tomatoes.

Using the training, the women have harvested and sold more than \$80,000 worth of produce since the partnership with USAID began. While most sales have been local, the business council marked its first sale for export in October with four metric tons of grapes sold to an Indian

Photo: USAID/ASAP

Badam Bagh farm grows grapes on trellises to demonstrate to farmers that yields are of excellent quality and more than doubled when using this superior method.

importer.

"The women were all surprised when they heard about the export and got very excited," said Mahooba Waizi, who helped establish the women's business council in 2003 to provide local women with access to training, capital, and other resources to create businesses. "They felt proud that they harvested and packed products that are crossing borders."

Mahooba said the business council is working to get its own export license. For the council, the deal that sent their grapes beyond the country's borders is hopefully just the first of many to come.